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The Process of Speech-acting Specifies Methods for Grasping Meaning. Ten Operations. A Contribution to Hermeneutics¹

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Abstract

How does speech-acting theory explain the generation of meaning and meaningful collective action? What place does first person subjective experience have in the theory? What are some of the methodological implications of the theory? The purpose here is to outline the Searlean theory of meaning formation and to draw some directions for research into meaning formation and organization from that outline. Searle assumes a deep intentionality, a directedness towards the world of all the human capacities. Searle asks: how do humans from external inputs from the world and through language produce knowledge of the world and organized projects that implemented change the world? Reasoning implies meaning. Reasons to act identify conditions of success = a meaningful act. Research directions (10) are drawn from elements of the speech act theory: the locutionary process, status assignments and meanings, willfulness, types of speech acts, decision-making, and organization.

Keywords

hermeneutics, speech acts, meaning formation, organization theory

Normativity and Facts

Finding, interpreting, and understanding the meaning people attach to what they say, what they see and do is a major task in social science. Those exercises can be termed hermeneutics. The task here is to investigate how speech-acting theory specifies those exercises. It is a first level

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investigation, in the sense that it searches for the hermeneutic methods from a specification of main elements/concepts and relations between them in the Searlean theory of speech-acting. A second level investigation would/should go deeper into the methods of interpretation deemed necessary by each of the elements of the theory.

How we generate meanings and meaningful action is contested. One view is that we will never really know because meanings are everywhere, that every investigation has to start from existing meanings among humans and can never really get outside of them. Moules, Field, McCaffrey, and Laing (2014) (quoting from David Abram) used the example of a physical object, a bowl. We have to look at it from an angle, from a perspective. We can never sense it fully, see it as a whole. Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb (2003) wrote of Gadamer in the same terms: We are in history with values and interests, therefore objectivity is impossible: “According to Gadamer (1993), we are all part of history and it is thus not possible to step outside history to look at the past objectively” (Fleming et al., 2003, p.115).

History is subordinated in our horizons, our perspectives. Even our consciousness is in history, therefore our pre-understandings are the structure of what we see and understand. Therefore, the method of investigation cannot get beyond co-production of interpretations between researcher and persons investigated = the method of conversation, turning things around together, looking at things from different perspectives. Gadamer suggested that all understanding is dependent upon pre-understandings. There is a narrow relation between questions and understanding. However, reflecting on our pre-understanding makes a transcendence of them possible (Fleming et al., 2003).

Searle (1995) agreed that pre-understandings are important – he called them first principles. He agreed that we are set in history and that meanings are all over where humans are. He posited that investigations imply perspectives, chosen angles. Investigations imply normativity: what interests me; which questions do I want to address? However, he suggested that nature, including humans as biological creatures, functions without perspectives. Normativity is not part of the physical-biological processes. They run their basic course independent of human subjectivity. We can, however, describe and even understand those facts and see their relations. Contrary to brute facts of nature, social facts and institutions are constituted on perspectives, on our normativity and willfulness. Moules et al. and Fleming et al. cited above do not make that distinction. Searle suggested that this difference between basic, brute facts and social institutional facts opens for investigations of the brute-social relations and for objective knowledge of how humans normatively generate meanings.

Dichotomies can be approached differently: for example (1) which side is true? Moules et al. and Fleming et al. seem to suggest that that perspectives influence seeing. Therefore, all knowledge contains subjectively chosen perspectives and thus objective knowledge is, in this sense, excluded. Judith Butler (2003) assumed that acting is dramatizing conventions and that the idea of freely choosing how to act is an illusion, itself a dramatizing of a convention. We enact conventions. Personal freedom is an illusion. Charles Taylor (1985) struggled with the dichotomy of language as either designation (signaling objects) or expression (articulating stories). He favored expressionism but cannot fully exclude designations. But dichotomies can (2) be approached in their relations. Searle was mainly on that track. What is the relation between the subjectivity of

the mind and the objective world of physics and biology? What is the relation between the production of knowledge and the willful production of projects into the future -- or the relation between cognition and volition? What is the relation between unregulated decision-making and institutional power?

Searle asked how, under which conditions, does human intentionality and language generate word/sentence meanings, agreements and social institutional facts. Some of those conditions may be hidden, not experienced, even though they are at work. Perspectives and interests are present when seeking knowledge, but perspectives and normativity are not part of, are not present in, the basic physical and biological processes. There is, in other words, a complex natural world without normativity. The human body is part of that world with consciousness, language, and the connected experience of time and freedom of choice. The task is to investigate interactions – how, for example, language produces insight into time, how sensing through processing of sense data can generate knowledge, or how ideas condition the biology of the brain. Thus, we can discern two approaches to meaning, to hermeneutics: 1) Normative positions or perspectives are inherent in all knowledge; objective knowledge is a false, science legitimating norm and 2) By investigating the relations between basic natural and constructed social facts, from different perspectives, and the conditions for the successful implementation of human intentions, objective knowledge of the meaning people/attach to their actions is possible.

The task then is to try – at this first level - to specify the Searlean speech-act theory and to extract some ideas of how to go about investigating meaning formation and meaningful action. The intention is to take strong findings in the Searlean philosophy of speech-acting and society and draw methods for research on meanings and action/organization from those findings.

Speech-acting, the Locutionary Process - Through Intentionality to Organization

The construction of collective intentions through speech-acting is a wide and rich field of investigations (Tollefsen, 2002). Those investigations raise the question how speech-acting through assigned meaning organizes or constructs organization among people, or how speech-acting constructs social institutional facts (Searle, 1995, 2001; Tuomela 2013). How does human biology and use of language make collective intentions possible? Humans are intentional creatures. Through all their senses and capacities they/we are actively engaged in the world. Humans can speak from practice and using abstract concepts, giving us time, other- and self-reflection and the possibility of making promises. Intentions, contextually developed, drive speaking. Words, or physical sound blasts are assigned meanings. The sounds we make are assigned status (Searle, 1995). So things in the world can be named and investigated not only practically but systematically and logically. Projects into the future – the expression of willfulness – can, through agreements, be constructed and described. We can make promises to each other to engage in projects. In this way speech-acting – sometimes - generates a new organization, a new, functional, operative group.

The basic element in speech-acting is the locution, a particular way of using words: a word or phrase. The locutionary process has two sides: the illocution - the intention of the speaker and the chosen means, and the perlocution - how the statement put forward is understood by the recipient of it and responded to. Practical knowledge does not require a language. A creature just

knows, through sensed physical experience what to do in different settings from desires and fears. Humans can work without having concepts on what they are doing. When the ability to use abstract concepts about things we experience and think – or language – comes around, the ability to investigate reaches new levels and the ability to dream up and formulate – more or less realistic – projects into the future expands human creativity. Speaking is acting, either in the sense of coming up with new insights, new knowledge, or in generating collective intentions and organization through agreements and promises or in creating disagreements, separations, and conflicts².

Normativity is present where people are alive and acting. Interests drive investigations. Findings and factual statements are put forward for reasons. They describe things that for some are unknown. The findings can themselves be reasons for acting. When I say it is raining outside, when it actually is raining (intention 1), I might make the factual statement because I think you should bring your umbrella or put on a rain-coat (intention 2). By making the statement, it enlightens (intention 1) and organizes (intention 2). We go out with umbrellas. Or, an example at a higher level of organization: if I am your boss, I call you into the office and say: “You are fired,” two things happen: (1) the statement changes the world, organizes, creates a new objective fact: from being an employee you are forcefully moved into the status of unemployed; and (2) it enlightens, it describes – in that moment – a new existing world. The rain statement is factual and it carries or is connected to a normative interest: bring umbrellas. The firing statement is different. It organizes directly, it creates a new fact, and it describes that fact at the same time³. A condition is that the person making the declaration has the authority and power to make it. Therefore, declarations are how power is used. Or declarations put power to work. So, the first suggested speech-act driven methodological operation in investigating meaning is:

(M1) Look at meaning as a form of intentionality; find the status people assign to words, sentence content, to persons, things and to action, how, under which conditions a deliberation leads to agreements, a common, a shared meaning.

Speaking is using concepts semantically and syntactically in a language. Words and sentences are assigned meaning to sound blasts. Sound h-o-u-s-e: meaning “building where people live” – in English. Such conceptual meanings and the proliferation of languages have deep, long histories. Searle has suggested that languages, because of their role in organizing societies, are ubiquitous and powerful institutions. Languages express the presence of society. The ability to use abstract language is a universal human, biologically based, competence. It is an aspect or capacity of human consciousness. Speaking is intentional, in the sense of directedness towards the world. Speaking can be seen as a five step circular intentional helix process, meaning that the circles are not closed: (1) the intention to speak; (2) the purpose in speaking; (3) the choice of means, what to say; (4) saying it; and (5) registering the reception – and perhaps activating a similar circular and interactive process with the person spoken to (the locution, the illocution and the perlocution, reiterated). Searle suggested that the assignment of meaning to something, driven by intentionality, is assigning a status to it: sound blasts assigned meaning; that a person is a teacher or a ring is a gift are status assignments, or formally as Searle (1995) suggested: X counts as Y in context C. Speaking is an interactive process, between a biologically driven intentionality and a conscious process of choosing what to say, in deliberation, in a setting of multiple institutions.

(M2) Ask/investigate how words/sentences are assigned status on both the illocutionary and perlocutionary sides. Ask how deliberation affects the status assignments, bringing them together or creating status disagreements and conflicts.

Intentionality

Living creatures are thoroughly intentional, all their living aspects, all their senses, being directed at or into the world. Intentionality is directedness. Any state of a conscious body directed at something beyond itself is an intentional state. Such a state has a content set in a psychological mode. A status assignment to sound-blasts, or the meaning of words and sentences, is a form of intentionality. Propositional intentional states indicate or contain what will make them successful. They have what Searle called conditions of satisfaction (COS). Propositions (P) also indicate their relation to the world, whether they primarily are meant to describe the world or to change it. That relation Searle called directions of fit (DF). Examples: P_1 : It is raining. The COS is that it actually is raining. The DF is from the world to the proposition: given it is raining, the problem is to make a proposition that conveys that fact to those being spoken to. This DF can be written from $W \rightarrow P$.⁴ P_2 : We would like to see the Labor Party win the elections: DF from words/the project to the world, to changing the world, or DF: from $P \rightarrow W$.

Meaning: A Form of Intentionality

Meanings, as status assignments, are produced through history and through deliberation, agreements, and institutions, and through the interplay of knowledge and projects – knowledge and politics and between brute natural and social institutional facts. Some intentional states are generated from the ground up, without any external observer engaged in the process. The personal feeling of hunger is an example. Searle called it an observer independent state of affairs or status assignment. What I mean when I say I am hungry is different. That meaning is observer dependent: dependent exactly on what I mean with the sentence I am hungry – for example, I would appreciate some food. Some statements on intentional states are just metaphorical. As an example, the plant in the window is thirsty. Searle (2001) noted that effective intentionality is dependent upon human capacities that allow for realization of the intention. Voting by raising your hand depends on you having the biological and physical capacity of raising your hand. So it is across the board. Searle called all these capacities for the Background of intentionality. Intentionality as living directedness is itself part of the Background. It is an observer independent capacity. When a house (in English) is a building to live in, the meaning of house is intentionally developed over time in the language; we want house to mean a building to live in. When we consider saying: that is the house of the Proust family, we evaluate the COS (1): example: are the people I am speaking to attentive to that statement now? If yes, I can/should make the statement. The COS (2) then is: Do the people I am speaking to know the Proust family? In other words, is the statement meaningful to them? The meaning of the statement is thus built through two COS evaluations. First (1) should I make the statement and then (2) related to the reception of the statement -- or COS2 on COS1.

Meanings are not static. They are produced. Some have a long and quite agreed upon history; others are generated here and now. Abstract language and the observer independent capacity of intentionality are the basic conditions, on, and from, which meaning is built through speech-

acting. Meanings are found through the applied COS, or the double COS: (1) the COS for making a statement and (2) the COS of made statement.

(M3) Investigate meaning through the COS people assign to their statements. Investigate meaning through the direction of fit between world and mind. Identify where the activity is, in formulating sentences about found world (knowledge), in formulating projects (directed at changing the world) or actually changing the world (organizing/reorganizing).

Direction of Causation

Searle added a third concept: the direction of causation or DC. The distinction between fit and causation serves the analysis of the relation between brute facts and social/institutional facts, between the natural physical and the social institutional.

Intentional causation of action is a type of causation; it is a mental causation. It is defined as any causal relation between an intentional state and its COS: Examples might be: a) a desire – thirst - causes me to drink water. In that case, the intentional state causes its COS, the actual drinking; or b) the possibility of drinking water causes my desire to drink water. In this case, the DC is opposite: COS causes the intentional state. If we look at a desire as a subjective project, then the DF is from the project (given) to (changing, adjusting) the world or DF: from $P \rightarrow W$. If we look at the desire as a fact, as a first person mental state, the desire causes the drinking. The desire is the world, the reality. It causes drinking as a subjective action. DC is from the world – the desire - a fact W to action A , or from $W \rightarrow A$.

The cause is there, but it is often not seen. I feel thirst. I drink. I do not experience what is causing the feeling, the desire. There are things/processes in my body beyond my conscious experience causing the thirst. That makes the search and the drinking of water possible and in a way, necessary. For an intention, a project, to be satisfied it has to have a from $P \rightarrow W$ DF – the P , the desire is there, given - you have to find the water. The DC of the same project is in the opposite direction, from $W \rightarrow$ to action A . The thirst causes the action, the drinking. Assigning or using meaning is thus a form of intentionality. Meaning serves a purpose.

(M4) Investigate the cause of intentional states. They are often a necessary condition for the state of mind. They are often not consciously experienced. They are at work in physical and biological micro-processes.

Intentions

When speaking together, deliberating, there might emerge an agreement to act together. The agreement can be termed a prior intention to the actual bodily action or cooperation, while the action, once started, is dependent upon often several adjusted, intentions-in-action. Meanings seen as a form intentionality in projects, in willful, future-directed actions, can be seen as a chain of three causes: (1) from deliberations to agreements or prior intentions; (2) from prior intentions to intentions-in-action and (3) from there to bodily movements or – in general: action = intentions-in-action + bodily movements (Searle, 2001, p.49).

Actions are willful. You have to dare to act. For that reason there is a TSG from thinking about acting to actually acting, going into the bodily movements or the cooperation. In that gap, you reflect on what to do and you develop a reason for acting a special way and you convince yourself – and others perhaps – that it is a good reason. You can act by means of something or by way of something: Turn off the light by flipping the switch (acting by means); Vote yes by raising your hand (voting by way of). Searle called the first action causal and the voting action constitutive. Raising your hand or not constitutes voting (Searle, 2001, p.52). Statements can thus have regulative or constitutive meanings.

(M5) Separate prior intentions from intentions in action and see that there often is a rule-free TSG. Separate regulative from constitutive statements. The latter, when effective, create social institutional facts.

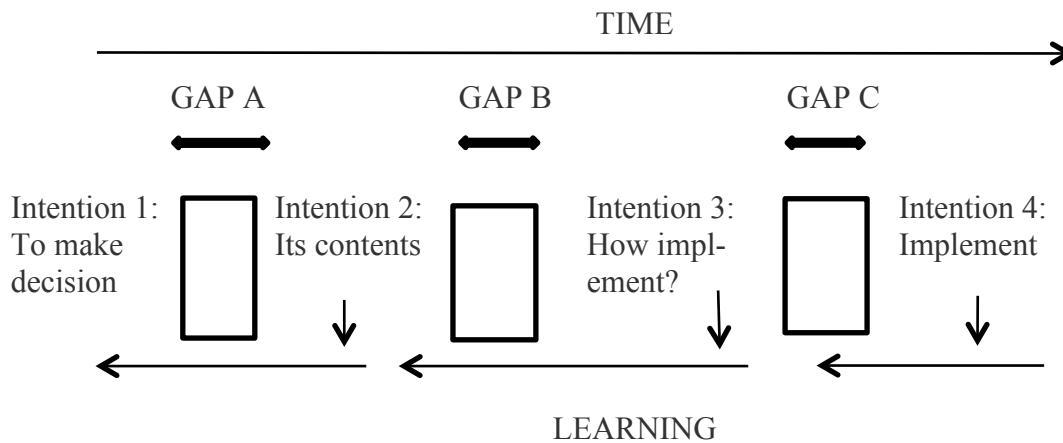
Willfulness and Rationality Imply Time-space Gaps

Agreements generate obligations. Obligations give reasons for acting. As an example (Searle, 2001): wanting a glass of beer is seldom a product of an obligation. Wanting a beer is most often a desire. So asking for a beer at a bar is most often a product of a desire. However, you are obliged to pay. That obligation is a desire-independent reason for paying. Our membership in institutions – as rule systems - generates generally desire-independent reasons for acting. Institutions vary on how close their rules are to our desires. If you have a shop making a good profit, that institution is close to your desire for money. The policeman who puts you in jail - for tax-evasion – is a member of an institution in that situation very far from your desires. The jail pushes more and stronger desire independent reasons for acting on you than did the bill in the “bierstube.” Most people are located in a set of institutions. Their rules and demands vary and are often hard to compare. Think of rules and demands made in families, firms, schools, the military, street gangs, cocktail parties, and doctoral promotions. However, acting demands a choice of which obligations, which institutions to honor in a specific situation. So how do we find out what to do? We make evaluations, develop and compare reasons for different possible and impossible actions. We compare the strength and weaknesses of the reasons. Because the institutions cannot be uniformly compared we are, at least for some moments - in a situation of genuine freedom. Our choice in that time-space gap - TSG - is not a logical or computational deduction. A chosen reason is then an unregulated leap from open alternatives into the world in the form of a decision or an action. A decision-making rule - for example family always first - would eliminate the freedom, close the TSG. Decision-making on what to do next, in the future has a project to world or word to world DF. Given the project, we try to adjust or change the world accordingly. Knowledge and desires influence the evaluations, but choosing which institution, which obligations to honor, is in principle a desire-independent reason for acting. Searle suggested that this capacity for acting on reasons is human rationality (Searle, 2001). Rationality unfolds in the TSGs between decisions and/or interventions/actions into the world. It is in the rule-free moments of evaluation of different institutional obligations that our freedom of will is active (Searle, 2004). That whole process is language dependent, making it possible to reflect in time on what to do in the situation we are in. We have bodily desires that do not demand reasons to be acted on. Therefore we do not need to engage heavily in the meaning of desires. Meanings are crucial in language and in the agreements that emerge from speech-acting. Relations are constituted on meanings.

(M6) If human rationality is seen as the capacity for reasoned action, and if we see that acting on desires actually does not require reasons, then rationality unfolds in rule-free TSGs evaluating varying desire independent reasons to act in relations to others.

We can specify the unfolding of rationality in gaps in a decision-making model:

Figure 2: A speech-act based model of decision-making. Reasoning takes time



The contribution of this model to research on meanings is especially the concept of the TSG. Decision-making takes time and has a period of prior reflection. In that period, the person moves /searches in for a moving but structured space of knowledge, interests, and institutions/rules. Her institutions, whether freely chosen or pushed effectively onto her, carry or demand obligations (see for e.g., Butler, 2003). But there is a new space – a gap - in that time flow without rules, making a free and open reflection on the situation and potential tasks and decisions possible. The gap is such that finally making a decision is a leap into the world, a leap that is beyond deductions. We might say with Charles Taylor (1985) that the leap, the decision, is a product of a holistic evaluation. It is an expression, an articulation beyond designations.

A good example of such speech-acting based decision-making emerges in Lie (1985). He investigated the political process in Norway between 1945 and 1950 when a struggle about Norway's position in the international contest between the Soviet Union and the USA unfolded. When Lie (1985) is a good example it is because he makes use of detailed reports from the internal meetings of the social democratic Labor Party on Norway's international position. He demonstrated how a deep interest in socialism and a trust in the Soviet Union, strengthened by its major contribution to the struggle against Nazi Germany is confronted in the internal Party meetings by new descriptions of Soviet oppression of peoples in bordering countries. Soviet allied communist parties in western European countries, including in Norway, seemed to support the oppression. Some Labor Party members chose exit and joined the Soviet communists in Norway. Others wavered and withdrew into passivity, while still others gradually changed their opinion, and joined into the discourse on how Western Europe should respond to threatening Soviet activity. Lie compared the Soviet international strategy to the emerging ideas of UN solidarity, the establishment of the Western Union (Benelux, Germany, France, and Italy 1951), the Marshall

Aid to Europe and the idea of a NATO alliance. Gradually, through continued meetings in the Party and in international meetings of socialist parties, the idea of a western alliance against Soviet postwar oppression was consolidated. Lie demonstrated the crucial role of the formal and informal meetings where knowledge is gradually forged about the real international and internal practice of the Soviet Union. Gradually Norway's international position – either neutrality or siding with the western democracies - is clarified and the Western alliance gains support. Micro materials from the meetings of the Labor Party continuously seen in their institutional and popular context in Norway and elsewhere, give a deep understanding of the decision-making process, both in the Party and, the next time around, in the open parliamentary decision-making.

(M7) To understand social and political development, investigate reflections and speech-acting in the TSGs between decisions and actions or interventions into the world through (powerful) meetings where people think, investigate and deliberate on politics and the means necessary for alternative routes of action.

Collective Intentions Generate Groups and Common Meanings

Deliberations can lead to agreements. Through agreements, people with varying and uncoordinated intentions come together in or under more or less well and commonly defined collective intentions. This might be seen as the trait of all sociality, of all social facts: common, shared intentions among two or more people, formed through speech-acting and dialogue in specific settings. For humans, the social takes on institutional form. Institutions may be defined as rules or conceptually defined collective intentions. Agreements create cohesion and give groups meaning. Examples could be: institutions as rule: driving on the right hand side of the road; a functional institution or organization: a trading firm with the intention of buying and selling food in markets with a profit. Without the abstract concepts – like rules, roads and trading firms - there would be no common presence of such regulated driving or such trading firms. Traffic would perhaps be dominated by the most powerful and trade would occur haphazardly. Speech-acting with the use of abstract concepts generates recognized collective intentions. Speech-acting in this sense organizes, or through repeated similar agreements, creates institutions. Speech-acting might even be seen as the motor of organizing, or at least as the key technology bringing persons in context sensitive modes into groups either regulating or engaging in new practical activity.

(M8) Search for and investigate agreements as collective intentions, more or less clearly and commonly expressed. In the case of organizations: see them as prior intentions to action. Study implementation through consecutive intentions-in-action. When you are investigating social relations, think beyond the subjective into the materiality of them.

When speaking we put forward propositions (p) in a psychological mode (M), for example a friendly or an aggressive mode. The proposition (p) is thus an M function of p: M(p). We can identify modes of speech-acting at the group level: a routine mode, an operative mode, a learning mode, a planning mode, etc. In organization and innovation studies, we can investigate how such modes are set, managed, and changed.

In general, organizations, through different media, carry meanings and socialize (prospective) members into them. But speech-act theory suggests that organizations are no more or less than the projects people assign to them. It is agreements and status assignments that hold organizations together. Power and sanctions can bolster them – for a while.

Knowledge and Projects

The distinction between knowledge and projects suggests that the two activities are qualitatively different; knowledge production is about the ability to use your senses, to investigate, to do research, to find indications of how that part of the world that interests you is structured, organized or how happenings function – how an organization for example affects the behavior of its members, how a certain amount of rain and air temperature affects movements in the protruding sections of the mountain Man in western Norway - at present (30.10.2014) evaluated as a huge potential rock-slide into the nearby fjord. The knowledge project is closing in on the truth of things of interest – both agreements and mountain movements - and keeping subjective interests and emotions of the researchers as far as possible from affecting the measurements and descriptions. The norm is truthfulness.

Project production, on the other hand, is different. Projects often have a starting point or a background in knowledge of things and in desires – like for example the experience of a disaster – but projects, because their core meaning is to change the world, are normative. Projects are willful. A project is a choice among alternative routes of action. Projects thus have a subjective ontology. Before they are realized they only exist in minds and agreements. Somebody wants to build a new house or a political party wants to increase its votes in upcoming elections. The project norm is not truthfulness. Project norms are engagement, mobilization, willfulness, realism and morals. Project implementation is dependent upon operative competence, ability to organize. Project competence and knowledge competence are thus interacting but different types of speech-acting. However, project competence is dependent on knowledge and knowledge is dependent on ability to organize relevant and realistic research projects. The meaning of a project is its relation to your interests and values. The meaning of piece of knowledge is its relevance to your projects.

In human consciousness, the two processes unfold continuously, the senses engaged in finding where we are at every moment (knowledge) and our fantasy and willfulness engaged continuously in what to do next (projects). The social world is constituted on our perspectives, our norms, values and willfulness. The physical and biological world is not. Its ontology is objective in the sense of not being constituted in any way by human subjectivity. Some social facts are first person subjective, and in that sense beyond objective knowledge. Agreements on the other hand are epistemologically open for objective descriptions. Producing knowledge of any kind is no simple matter. In that process perspectives, fantasy, ability to articulate hypotheses, controlled use of methods, knowledge of relevant sources etc. is of importance. Meaning is continually produced in the ubiquitous interplay between knowledge and projects, between “where I am” and “where to go next.”

(M9) Separate knowledge production from project production and realization, and study how the two competences are related and interdependent. Both brute and social facts are open for objective descriptions.

Five Speech Acts with Different Meanings

Searle has suggested that there are five types of speech acts (Searle, 1979). They affect the production of meaning differently. *Assertives* are typically about the world, both the social and the physical world. They are subservient to truth conditions, that the things asserted actually exist, that they can be registered and described in a meaningful way from the registrations. The DF of assertives is from the world to words. *Directives* stimulate and direct actions, a type of wielding power. Their meaning is dependent upon their specificity. They are evaluated normatively. The DF of directives is from words to world. The condition of their success is that people do what is directed, in effect that the words change the world. The third type is *commissives*, making promises and commitments. Commissives create obligations. They suggest that a certain action will occur in the future. Commissives are important for trust. Their meaning is dependent upon type of action implied in the obligation. Their value is dependent upon their importance in a life situation. The DF is like for directives, from words to world, but in a different sense. While directives try to direct the action of the other, commissives that are sincere bind the future action of the person making the commitment. The COS is that the promising person does that which was promised. The fourth type is *expressives*. They give voice to an emotion. Expressives can strengthen or weaken the feeling of community in a group. The meaning of expressives is exactly that function. Expressives have no DF. They emanate as such from a person to others. The fifth type is of special importance (Searle, 2010). *Declarations* have, as mentioned, a double function simultaneously. They change the world and describe it at the same time. Their prime COS is that what is declared actually happens. “You are fired” is such a declaration, with COS that the employee accepts. But a secondary COS is that the person making the declaration has the authority to make such declarations. If the employee accepts, that authority (however limited) is in place. If not, the reason can be that the authority is not there or that the power supporting the continued employment of the person overrules the declaration. Here, Searle was close to Judith Butler’s thesis that acting is realizing/dramatizing conventions. The power of the firing agent is deeply dependent upon acceptance in society of that power. However, the speech-acting gaps of unregulated reflection suggest that no matter how strong the convention there is a room, a space for freedom to act in deviation from or in contradiction to the convention. The speech act theory thus solves – in embryo - a problem Butler’s strong conventionalism leaves unsolved: the creation of new institutions and new conventions.

How Agreements Organize

Through Disseminations

New agreements occur in often densely institutionalized settings. It is, as Butler underscored, interesting how values and power in that setting influence decision-making and personal thoughts and actions. It is also interesting how new agreements spread into the setting or meet

boundaries there. Agreements themselves create boundaries. Often they imply – in embryo – hierarchy, an unequal distribution of power between the members of the agreement.

Knut Dahl Jacobsen (1964) specified a set of concepts for analyzing how decision-making organizes, within the decision-making group and beyond it. He did not, at the time of writing, have access to the micro theory of speech-acting, but in hindsight we might call his understanding of decision-making as collective speech-acting or group speech-acting. In his study of how the organization of public administration of agriculture changed in Norway in the 19th century, he suggested a scheme for the study of how decisions and agreements affect and construct group and extra-group activities. Agreements organize directly and through disseminations.

Table 1: Decisions have in-group and extra-group effects

<p>Within-group: look for the distribution of:</p> <p>commitments, responsibilities, initiatives and information</p> <p>Extra-group: look for spread or contraction of:</p> <p>legitimacy, decision acceptance, decision outreach and power</p>

Source: Knut Dahl Jacobsen 1964

I- and We-modes

Speech-acting and agreements create social facts. The agreements often express a psychological movement of persons or groups from an I-mode to a we-mode of participation. Agreements change relations, change our self-understanding. They connect us to others, they can construct an I-mode of participation in a group activity, as an example: I will do my part of painting the house. At a higher level, agreements can generate a we-mode of participation; for example: Asked: “What are you doing?” Answer: “We are painting the house” (Tuomela, 2013). In both cases the house might well be painted, but the we-mode-understanding will imply a different responsibility for the overall task. A second example: “I am an employee of firm A and will do my part of the job for a wage” – an I-mode of participation. Or; “our unit/organization is a cooperative; we are all members of the unit engaged in organizing, sustaining and doing the work.” Agreements impact groups internally and affect their status externally. Agreements most often also exclude, creating borders to the environment. Agreements can imply hierarchy and oppression, however without the oppression very often being accepted by the oppressed⁵.

(M10) Agreements create new social facts, new institutions – not necessarily different from existing institutions - and usually empower members to the agreement. But often agreements generate hierarchy and exclude values, interests and actual and potential participants.

Multi-institutional Contexts

Agreements can increase internal differentiation and hierarchic power. We can from these insights see an emergent more complex model of generative speech-acting, a model of how speech-acting generates organization (Gran, 2014). Speech-acting is intentional, is directed at someone, it functions through status assignments and flows through illocutions and perlocutions back and forth, some speech-acting resulting in agreements. Speech-acting at the person to person level (micro) and at the collective level, as decision-making in groups (macro) takes place in institutionalized contexts. The subjectively honored institutions deliver commitments and responsibilities. Speech-acting is the unfolding of rationality in the sense of searching for and generating desire-independent reasons for acting. Because the setting is multi-institutional there is an element of freedom in time between interventions, generating responsibility, where the person is in search of the best reason for acting in a certain way, honoring one or a selected set of obligations. That freedom unfolds in a certain, more or less limited, TSG that is not rule-regulated. A rule would eliminate the freedom, would collapse rationality as the search for an acceptably reasoned action. The nexus of language capacity, speaking together and making agreements, where the agreements assign the conditions of their satisfaction, their realization can be seen as a motor of meaningful action and organization.

At present the most general and powerful institutional context of speech-acting can be – and most often is - the nation state. That institution is seldom deducted from and negotiated within common general norms, but created by fiat as a sovereign institution in a delimited territory that can be physically defended by the resources controlled by those who effectively initiate and take on state responsibility.

In this way speech-acting theory is developed at two levels: micro and macro and at each level in a setting of actors in their institutional/historical context.

Table 2: Levels and contexts of speech-acting

	Acting	In context of
Level 1 speech-acting interpersonal	Locutions, illocutions, perlocutions	Established collective intentions, institutions
Level 2 decision-making in groups/organizations	Intentions to act, collective decisions and their implementation	Established institutions and most generally of nation states demanding sovereignty

Meaning is assigning status to these actors and processes, to decisions and following actions. Meaning is calibrated, the calibration is important for the power – and status of the different parts of the activity. Meaning can be researched through the COS, the conditions of realization assigned to the decisions.

Conclusion: How Speech-acting Generates Meaning and Organization

Speech-acting is a theory of how humans generate meanings, the meanings of what they say, do and see/have in their surroundings. Speech-acting theory is by implication for research on

meaning formation, a contribution to hermeneutics. Meanings are historically produced. The Searlean approach is to seek out the micro-processes that generate meaning – over time. Sociology is related to biology. Articulation is not separated absolutely from designation. Institutionalized power does in no case completely eliminate subjective freedom. We apply perspectives, but they are not in the physical/biological world, making whole descriptions of objects and processes possible. Subjectivity does not exclude objectivity.

Meaning is created through the use of language, where sounds become concepts when a status is assigned to them, and where persons and things gain identity the same way, through status assignments. Statuses are products of spoken-about practices over time. Persons become teachers, buildings become parliaments and metal is formed into artefacts. The general mechanism X counts as Y in context C is at work. Meaning can be approached from the context or from the subjectivity of the person: either, what is a common understanding of the role of a teacher, or how does teacher A in place B conceive of the contents of that label? Meanings can be sought in the conditions a person or a group considers as success criteria for a planned practice. Articulation (of the project) is important, but its meaning emerges more fully in the conditions defining success.

Speech-acting, through agreements creates or contradicts social facts. Agreements are by definition collective intentions, more or less equally defined by the parties to the agreement. Collective intentions constitute the social. The social in that sense has a subjective ontology. The social exists as agreements and disappears when agreements are eroded. In this sense, the social is different from basic processes in the physical and biological nature. They have an objective ontology. They are mostly beyond human constitutive influence. The structure of water and of light waves is beyond or below human creativity. However, agreements materialize through iteration and practice and (some) can be objectively described. So the subjective ontology can be combined with an objective epistemology. But meaning as such can hardly be materialized. Meaning must be exposed and sought through speech-acting (widely defined as expressing a state of affairs).

Reiterated agreements create institutions. Institutions can in general be seen as rules, agreements on behavior in varying contexts, and rules as institutions when the agreements reach a certain level of commonality and are respected and copied. Organizations can be seen as functional institutions, which are - as rule systems - developed within a group that has a defined – collective – task. Institutions are the materials of a society, of a culture. They are constituted, reproduced, and dismantled through the powerful medium of speech-acting. We can be and are pushed and socialized into institutions and we can enter them willingly. No matter how we enter, they generate – or force upon us - obligations. In this sense, they are materials of rationality, materials – obligations - we reason on when acting. Institutions carry meaning. Schools define the task of learning, the military the task of killing and defending national territories, the market the possibility of transacting to gain goods we want and give up goods we are willing to offer etc. Institutions liberate and exclude. Rules are often seen as constraints on acting. But in a deeper sense, rules generate new ways of interacting, making possible the production of artefacts and relations that expand human livelihoods. Think of the huge step forward implied in the creation of schools. The idea emerged that instead of continual down to earth learning in practical activity, for example the father teaching the girl how to paddle a dugout boat as they actually used it, we

might gather youngsters in a community with a teacher or two, who had practical experience, who could do his/her own investigations into a practice and teach it systematically to the youngsters. The school was a new social institutional fact with a huge teaching advantage compared to the unorganized, individualized learning process. In this sense, the school was a social innovation that expanded and deepened the learning processes globally, and in its wake saw the creation of colleges, universities, and research institutes. In this sense the school was hardly a constraint, even if it did require some discipline from the teachers and pupils. So it is with most institutions. However, most institutions also exclude. Private schools might say that only pupils who can pay can join, or only pupils from the community of the owners of the school can become pupils. Electing a leadership of the school excludes other persons from that leadership. A firm selects some workers among many more candidates. A nation state might well exclude people from entering and national rules might make certain activity illegal, with dire consequences for those who act illegally. The IS (at present December 2014) seem to consider killing people who indicate a religious belonging outside the religious and political bounds of IS as quite legitimate. The American government in August 1945 considered it legitimate to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima to end the Second World War. Functional institutions then may use terrible forms of hierarchic power to implement their values and goals. In this sense, oppression may be an ingredient of upholding institutions, maybe even a constitutive ingredient. Nation states are perhaps those present institutions that most obviously have oppressive power, in the form of military and police, as a constitutive element of their mere existence. In this sense, we might say – in the present stage of nation state organization of politics, violence is lurking everywhere. Human language use and the abstract concepts in it generate rationality: the ability of transcending stimulus-response and acting on reasons. In this sense, speech-acting is the motor of meaning formation and of institutions, the basic structures of any society (Searle, 2010).

Endnotes

¹ Drafts presented for the PGI group, DAO, University of Bergen and at PHD course BI, Business University, Nydalen, Oslo, on invitation from professor Tore Bakken. Thanks for listening, for good comments and suggestions. Thanks also for valuable comments from two anonymous evaluators.

² Judith Butler 1997 investigated hate speech from a speech-act perspective. Her question is “what version of the performative is at work” – in hate speech. She contributed importantly to the discussion when does speaking become acting, and when does that acting become illegal. But Butler criticized the idea that hate speakers are autonomous. Rather they are enmeshed in power structures. She found support for that view in Foucault: “grasp subjection in its material instances as a constitution of subjects.” So change of hate speakers implies change of power structures. This view makes Butler unattentive to the Searlean investigations of how speech-acting is managed by persons in interactions. It is a negative idealization Butler says, to view speech-acting as “sovereign action.”

³ Searle 2010 suggested that such declarations are the most powerful speech-acts.

⁴ Searle described the same relation as adjusting P to W or $P \rightarrow W$ or DF as downward.

⁵ In my opinion Searle had little time for the analysis of borders, hierarchy, and oppression. See Gran (2011).

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